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The Unreal MACOI

A press card does not a reporter make. It's an old verity, but one apparently not familiar to the U.S. Military Assistance Command's Office of Information (MACOI) in South Viet Nam. Its Saigon accreditation office issued press cards last month to four U.S. military investigators. What they were supposed to investigate is unclear, though genuine correspondents in Saigon suspect they intended to use their press cover to probe sources of news leaks, the operation of the black market and the scope of antiwar movements. Despite attempts by the agents to melt invisibly into the Saigon press corps, their cover was quickly blown. MACOI tried to brush off the incident by blaming it on a major who had approved the cards, but in fact he had merely obeyed orders. The U.S. embassy pushed for a fuller inquiry. Perhaps the Office of Information should be called the unreal MACOI.